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Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, New Series, Vol. 3, No. 3,
Settlement and Conflict in the Mediterranean World. (1978), pp. 259-273.

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Settlement and conflict in Corsica

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MS received 30 September 1977

ABSTRACT. The evolution of settlement in Corsica is reviewed in relation to three categories of conflict, geopolitical, economic and developmental, each coinciding with specific forms of domination. External domination has been exacerbated by internal divisions, which also have influenced settlement patterns.

THE growing tide of political and social unrest which has marked Corsica during the last decade is but the latest episode in a pattern of conflict which extends back to the dawn of history. Significantly, the present disturbances have been evoked by the struggle to gain freedom from what is perceived as excessive external domination of the island's life. Significantly too, this struggle has been characterized by internal dissension between the *Union du Peuple Corse*, a party which favours an autonomous status within the French Republic, and the *Front de Libération Corse*, which seeks a 'national' independence. Both these parties denounce a further internal element, the 'clan chiefs', who constitute the prevailing power structure of ruling and influential families in local and island politics and economic organization. For good measure, the *Bona-partist* party rejects all notions of autonomy and remains devoted to integration within France. These two themes, external domination and internal division, have been the major causes of conflict throughout the island's troubled history and have exerted a powerful influence on the development of settlement. This paper attempts a survey of the effects of conflict on settlement location and development and in particular proposes a three-fold chronological classification of conflict types with related specific effects on settlement. Before embarking on this classification it is necessary to summarize physical conditions on the island from the standpoint of man's occupancy and use of resources.

THE PHYSICAL SETTING OF CORSICAN SETTLEMENT

A history of almost incessant conflict has led Corsicans to evaluate terrain and land resources in a manner consistent with maximum security of settlement sites from both internal and external attack. The physical background has been detailed in several texts, and Figure 1 summarizes simply the generalized structure and major regions (Rondeau, 1964; Albitreccia, 1933; Thompson, 1971). Ratzel's description of the island as 'a mountain in the sea' is often quoted (Ratzel, 1899), but the island is in fact constituted by two mountain systems of differing character. West of a line from St Florent to Solenzara, Corsica is composed of crystalline rocks, chiefly granite. Uplifted and tilted in the Alpine orogeny, these rocks have been deeply eroded on either side of a central spine producing a series of over twenty mountain ridges disposed in a herring-bone pattern. The effect has been to produce an uncompromising environment in which movement is confined to the valleys by mountain walls. Productive soils are restricted to the valley floors with forest dominating the higher slopes, giving way above the tree line to rough grazing supporting extensive pastoralism. The crystalline mountains thus nurtured a pastoral economy and patriarchal society in which the tormented relief fostered isolation and the formation of introspective attitudes, a clan organization and mistrust of outsiders.

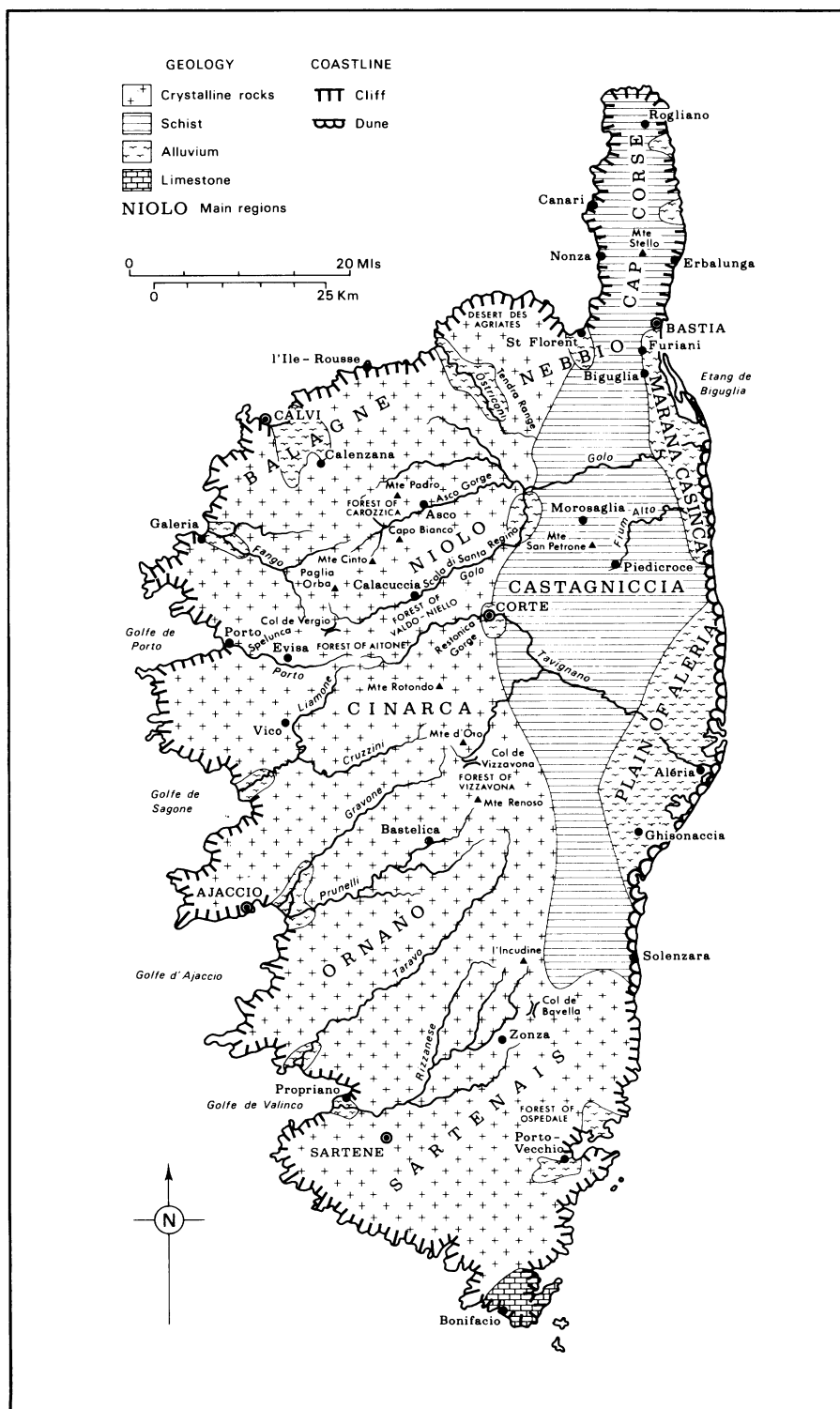


FIGURE 1. Generalized geological zones and major regions

To the east, the Alpine movements compressed sediments against the rigid crystalline mass, creating a second mountain system of folded and metamorphosed schists. This complex system is lower than the crystalline mountains and has more open relief. Soils are more fertile and could support more widespread agriculture and arboriculture. Nevertheless, the degree of dissection is high so that, as to the west, obstacles to movement are substantial and a similar compartmentalization of communities resulted. Between the two systems, a structural depression gives rise to a central furrow consisting of small basins and followed in part by major rivers. It offered relatively easy passage and level land, making it a favoured site for settlement, although its strategic importance also made it an obvious battleground (Simi, 1967).

The distinction between the two mountain systems has a significance extending beyond geological considerations. Since the twelfth century, the central spine separated the north-eastern *En deçà des Monts (di qua dai Monti)* from the western and southern *Au delà des Monts (di lu dai Monti)*. This distinction was between the *Banda di Dentro*, the more densely populated zone which was open to Italian influences and where agricultural development and social evolution advanced more surely, and the *Banda di Fuoro*, with much lower settlement density, more tenuous external influence and the domain of pastoralists and of autocratic feudal signeurs. The marchland between the two zones persists as a band of extremely low population density trending north-west to south-east across the island, now incorporated as a regional park and closely followed by the new *département* boundary between *Haute-Corse*, centred on Bastia, and *Corse du Sud*, centred on Ajaccio. In both zones the effect of mountainous relief was to compartmentalize settlement into isolated communities on basically autarchic lines. A higher tier of spatial organization was evolved in the form of *pièves*, groups of communes falling within natural units. The *pièves* were formalized under Pisan influence in the twelfth century and were substantially accommodated into the French system of *cantons*, but Renucci (1974b) has drawn attention to their territorial instability. Marriage arrangements, land transactions and marauding shepherds in search of fresh pasture influenced the attachment of individual communes to particular *pièves*.

If fragmentation of settlement was one result of physical conditions, so variations in land resources influenced the actual density. Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of villages which are designated as *chefs-lieux* of communes and are thus reliably indicated as being the important and permanent ones. Their distribution is superimposed on the basic three types of terrain found in Corsica (Carloti, 1936). The littoral zone, below 100 metres, has a discontinuous distribution consisting of small pockets of lowland, enlarged at the mouths of major rivers. The most extensive lowland, the eastern coastal plain, extends from Bastia to Solenzara, but its surface is accidented and edaphic and hydrological conditions are far from uniform. In particular, a distinction must be drawn between the glaciais of late Quaternary debris, with its clay-rich soils, and the more fertile recent alluvium. With its unmodified Mediterranean climate and fertile soils, the littoral represents the island's best land resources, but, as Figure 2 shows, it is almost devoid of settlement. A second terrain is constituted by the *côteaux* zone, between 100 and 350 metres. This is a discontinuous band of dissected hill land flanking the central mountain core, representing a deterioration in environmental conditions in that slopes are steep and soils less fertile than those of the plains. However, Figure 2 demonstrates that a majority of Corsica's villages are located in this zone, in the Balagne, Cap Corse and on the eastern ramparts of the Castagniccia particularly (Anfossi, 1918). Sedentary agriculture, involving vines, olives and dry-farmed cereals underpinned the economy, but this zone is now the scene of heavy depopulation and an atmosphere of dereliction prevails, with 75 per cent of the land area under maquis (Plesnik, 1976). The vast majority of the island is constituted by mountain terrain above 350 metres, but penetrated by a radial network of high valleys. A distinction must be made between the schistose portion, comprising the Castagniccia with its dense network of high valleys, and the granitic mountain core,

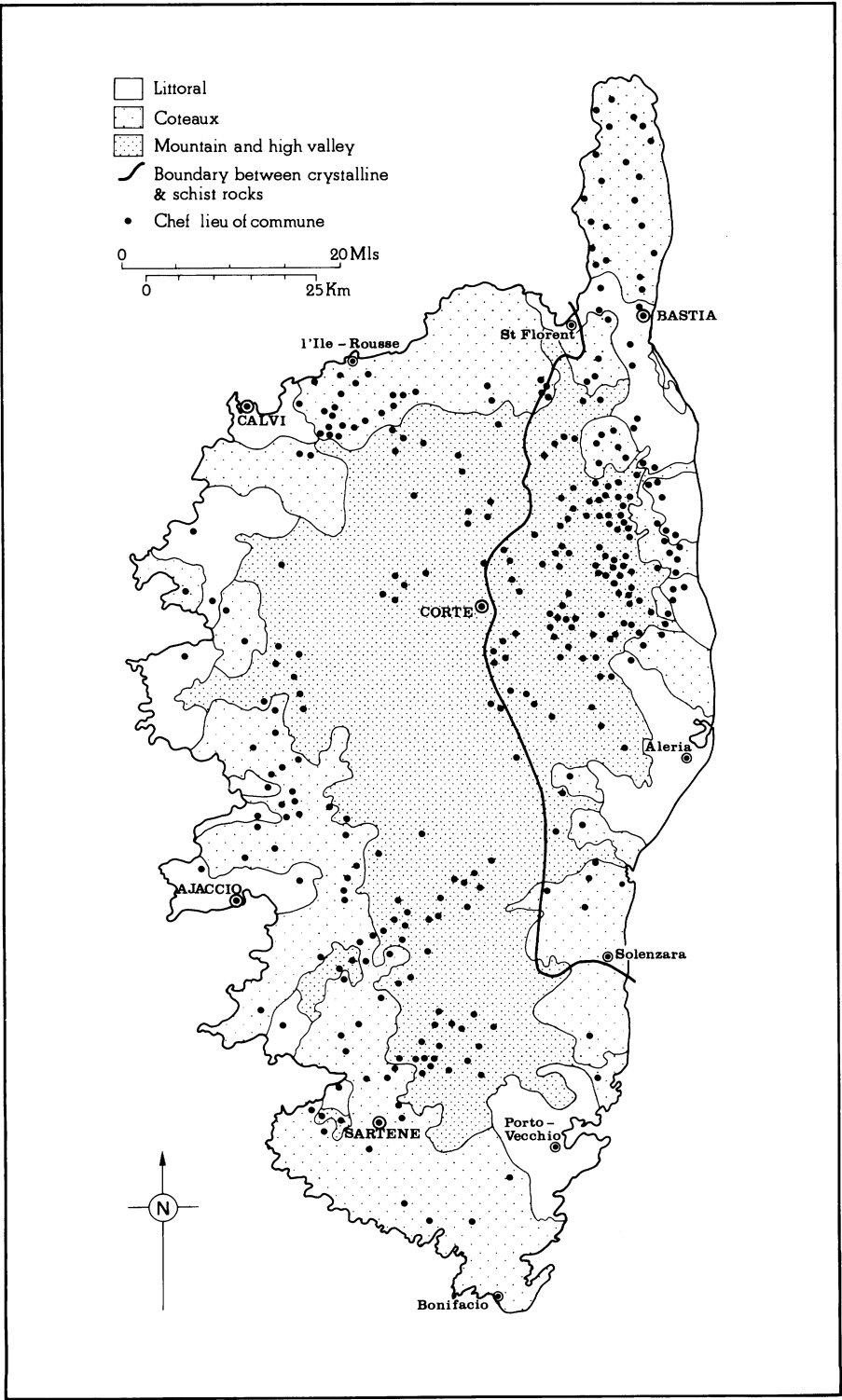


FIGURE 2. Terrain types and settlement distribution

with its more elevated relief and more limited valley development. The Castagniccia, distributed between 600 and 1000 m, as its name implies is the chestnut zone. A remarkable proliferation of villages lines the flanks of the valleys and testifies to the past importance of the chestnut as a source of food supply for human consumption and livestock, a construction material and source of tannin (Perry, 1967). By contrast, the granitic interior has a very low settlement density, with villages confined to the major valleys and associated with an extensive and transhumant form of pastoralism in the Niolo, Cinarca and Ornano.

Although Figure 2 displays a considerable spatial irregularity of Corsican rural settlement, there is an evident consistency in village type. In general, Corsican villages are strongly nucleated and massively compact. Villages vary in size from substantial proportions to mere hamlets, but isolated dispersed settlement is rare and is a relatively recent feature. Dispersion was deterred by the need for security from attack and for communal effort in self-sufficient economies and by the extended family basis of society. Truly isolated settlement consisted chiefly of simple shelters occupied seasonally by transhumant shepherds. Permanently occupied, dispersed, rural settlement at the coast is a recent feature, post-dating French annexation and mainly post-1943 with the eradication of malaria from the plains. Some local variations in settlement form and siting do occur within the overall nucleated pattern (Poncin, 1977). In Cap Corse, for example, the erosion of the schist anticline into parallel latitudinal steep valleys favoured the development of clusters of hamlets complemented at the coast by *marines* (*cala*). By contrast, the Castagniccia is an area of larger villages favouring hillside sites and particularly the defensive advantages offered by spurs. Apart from access to spring water, most Corsican villages were sited with a favourable exposure to insolation and, where possible, a degree of physical concealment in the case of villages within easy approach from the sea.

The foregoing discussion has attempted to summarize the distribution of rural settlement and to indicate broad relationships to the physical background. Reference to urban settlement was deliberately excluded since, with few exceptions, the towns were late foundations of non-Corsican origin and are best dealt with in an historical context. Attention may now be turned to the role of conflict in the establishment of the settlement pattern. It is proposed that three types of conflict, which occurred in the stated chronological order but were of differing duration, account for the major outlines of settlement distribution and form. The three types proposed are conflict based on geopolitics, conflict between the traditional economy and mainland Europe, and conflict engendered by the recent process of development.

CONFLICT, SETTLEMENT AND GEOPOLITICS

Corsica has been afflicted throughout its history by conflicts emanating from outside the island, as more powerful neighbours occupied its shores as a strategic factor in broader issues of power politics (Arrighi, 1969). Although much remains to be discovered of the island's prehistory, it seems established that at the dawn of history Corsica was inhabited by pastoral groups of Iberian and Celto-Ligurian origin. From the sixth century B.C. onwards, this indigenous population was subject to a series of incursions, aimed less at colonization of an intractable people and a difficult environment than at mastery of strategic sea routes in the Tyrrhenian and Ligurian. The first such incursions were of Greek origin, when Phocaeans established a trading base at Alalia on the east coast. A confused period of contention ensued between Phocaeans, Carthaginians and Syracusans, but to the Greeks may be attributed the introduction of the vine, olive and cereals, and, in Alalia, the first vestige of urban civilization. The Greeks were supplanted in 260 B.C. by the Romans who built a new city, Aleria, on the site of the ruined Alalia. A second new town was built at Mariana near the mouth of the Golo. The Romans interfered little with the established society, but the introduction of Latin speech and Christianity were permanent

legacies. Other Roman innovations were to be less permanent, for neither the towns nor the widespread cultivation of the plains were to survive the Dark Ages.

After six centuries of rule as an imperial province, the collapse of Rome ushered in a further six centuries of barbarian incursion. The island fell prey successively to the Vandals, Ostrogoths, Byzantines and Lombards, and from the eighth to tenth centuries to repeated Saracen pillage. It is clear that during this chaotic period the essential outlines of the present rural settlement pattern crystallized. The insecure plains, productive under Roman occupation, were abandoned in favour of more secure village sites in the mountains and *côteaux*. Renucci estimates that as many as 100 coastal settlements disappeared from the landscape (Renucci, 1974a). In their abandoned state the plains became the site of endemic malaria (Le Lannou, 1936) and remained so until 1943. The traditional greeting *pace e salute*, peace and good health, alludes to the twin scourges of the island, warfare and disease. The experience of six centuries of barbarian attack did little to cement Corsican solidarity, but rather fostered internecine bloodshed between rival clans and between itinerant pastoralists and sedentary cultivators. In spite of frequent recourse to Papal adjudication, the struggle between the feudal seigneurs was bloodthirsty and the search for secure village sites was as much a reflection of internal anarchy as of external attack.

A brief respite was afforded by transfer of authority over the island to the city state of Pisa in 1077. However, the subsequent division of Corsica between Pisa and her rival Genoa transformed the island into a battleground again until the eventual triumph of Genoa in 1347. Moreover, the city states successfully applied the principle of 'divide and rule' and thus ensured a continuation of internal anarchy. The Genoese victory heralded four centuries of turbulent rule, marked by periodic rebellion and an incomplete mastery, particularly in the *Au delà des Monts*. The initial impact of Genoese mastery was limited, since the major preoccupation was with strategic control rather than colonial exploitation. The task of exploiting the island's resources was delegated to commercial banks and merchants who hired mercenary troops to call the population to order; a practice which made for further unrest. In one respect, however, the presence of the Genoese overlord fundamentally altered the settlement pattern through the rebirth of urban civilization.

Kolodny (1962) has demonstrated that Corsican culture lacked an urban tradition. The fragmentation of the interior settlement into self-contained and self-sufficient units diminished the need for towns as centres of trade and administration. Similarly, the unhealthy and insecure littoral generated no major port towns after the eclipse of Roman Aleria. With the exception of Cap Corse, the sea played an insignificant role in Corsica's indigenous economy. By contrast, Genoa was a sea power, and to maintain this role created a chain of fortified *citadelles* on defensive sites overlooking sheltered anchorages. Thus Bonifacio (1195) and Calvi (1268) were created at opposite extremities of the island at strategic locations, followed by Bastia, St Florent, Ajaccio and Porto-Vecchio. Created as fortified garrisons and anchorages, the *citadelles* became the seats of Genoese administration and commerce. Their development as centres of power and activity attracted Corsican settlement and, although their population expansion occurred more rapidly after the French annexation, nevertheless they constituted real urban centres, and to the Genoese must be attributed the present coastal pattern of Corsican urbanization. The struggle with Genoa was also responsible for the Corsicans themselves turning to town construction. During the course of a major rebellion, supported by Aragon, a *citadelle* was built in 1420 on an impregnable crag at Corte in the heart of the island and became a centre of resistance. Changing hands several times during the course of the next three centuries, Corte became the capital of an ephemeral Corsican Republic in 1755 created by Pascal Paoli's war of independence, and sheltered a population of almost 2000. The short-lived republic also saw the creation of a second Corsican town at l'Ile Rousse on the north coast, as a rival to nearby Calvi which had remained

loyal to Genoa. The development of Sartène in the far south followed a dissimilar pattern. The Gulf of Valinco and the Rizzanese Valley were frequently attacked by the Saracens, and Sartène developed as a stronghold of seigneurial power some distance from the coast. The town was fortified in the sixteenth century and achieved urban dimensions by virtue of its importance as the seat of influential ruling families in this remote area of the *Au delà des Monts*, where Genoese authority was frequently only nominal and always disdained.

By the mid-eighteenth century Genoa was a waning power and Paoli's republic was only crushed with assistance from France in 1769; this paved the way for French annexation in 1789. Apart from a bizarre interlude of nominal British rule during the Napoleonic War, the island has remained under French occupation, interrupted only by German and Italian occupation during the Second World War. With French annexation, the long centuries of external political domination came to an end, for Corsica became an integral *département* of metropolitan France. The effects on settlement of this long history of conflict are emphatic. The pivot of the island's society and economy was firmly based in the mountain interior, where factors of security overrode the mediocre resource base as compared with the insecure and malarial plains. The combination of outside attack and internal warfare retarded social and economic advance. Lefebvre (1957) has drawn a picture of poverty and malnutrition with fluctuating death rates and stagnant population growth in spite of high natural fertility rates. In times of stability the population increased, only to be decimated by subsequent casualties, epidemics and famine during periods of strife. The vendetta and banditry took a high toll of life in the absence of effective formal justice, and at the time of French annexation a total population of only 110 000 seems probable. Urban settlement languished owing to the low level of economic activity and external trade, and industry had scarcely evolved beyond artisan crafts. When annexation and political stability opened up the island to normal external contacts, Corsica was ill-equipped to resist the new currents of external competition. The best land resources were uninhabited, uncultivated and still malarial. The population was concentrated into areas of limited potential employing archaic argicultural techniques and subject to internal frictions. The history of conflict therefore not only conditioned the initial settlement pattern but also doomed it to decadence once conflict had been resolved, for by the time of French annexation the ground had been prepared for the subsequent dispersal of population and massive rural depopulation.

THE CONFLICT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC SYSTEMS

Once absorbed into the French republic, Corsica was spared conflict based on the territorial aspirations of outside powers. Instead, the conflict which marked the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was one of uneven struggle between contrasted socio-economic systems as the fragile island economy was exposed to the competition of a more advanced European system. This conflict was at first masked, since the return of security and stable administration under French tutelage was paralleled by a remarkable demographic upsurge and a rise in the island's output. Lefebvre has shown that from a population of approximately 110 000 in 1798, Corsica more than doubled its inhabitants to 280 000 by 1880 (Lefebvre, 1957). However, this demographic growth occurred essentially within the framework of the traditional system and was unaccompanied by any innovation in technology or advance in agrarian methods. Corsica thus reached a stage of rural population pressure at precisely the time when improved steamship navigation opened the way to the full force of competition from more efficiently produced foodstuffs and manufactures from the mainland. Initially, from the densely settled Cap Corse, Balagne and Castagniccia, and after the turn of the century from the more remote *Au delà des Monts*, Corsicans began an exodus from their island. This was promoted by the collapse of the traditional agro-pastoral economy and stimulated by increased information levels of superior

opportunities in mainland France and the French colonies which engendered an emigration psychosis. Much has been written of the Corsican exodus and its scale has been meticulously quantified by Renucci (1974a). From a maximum of 280 000 inhabitants in 1880, the population slumped to little more than 150 000 by 1955 and the rural population was more than halved. The causes of the exodus were complex. Minor causes were the ravages of phylloxera and, more seriously, of ink disease in the chestnut forests (Perry, 1967). Similarly, war casualties in the Franco-Prussian and two world wars were significant. The root cause, however, was the collapse of the rural economy in the face of cheap food imports, particularly of cereals. Corsican grain yields were low, and milling technology by low-powered water mills inadequate, so that chestnut meal was the preferred flour of much of the population. The abandonment of cereal cultivation combined with the decay of the chestnut forests robbed Corsica of its staple foodstuffs which were replaced by imported grain. Improved education raised the expectations of young Corsicans and stimulated the search for employment outside the island, particularly in secure administrative professions. Deprived of its reproductive age groups, the residual population lost its demographic buoyancy, and agriculture declined further for want of labour supplies.

The impact on settlement of this exodus was profound. In Cap Corse, the Castagniccia and the interior Balagne, villages stood half-abandoned amidst uncultivated fields which rapidly succumbed to the advance of the *maquis*. Many smaller hamlets were virtually extinguished and once-large villages were reduced to what Renucci has termed 'micro-villages'. In a positive sense, the exodus from the interior and the increased contact with the mainland heightened the relative and absolute importance of the coastal towns. In particular, the major ports of Bastia and Ajaccio expanded substantially, whereas the interior towns of Corte and Sartène, more dependent on their relationship to the indigenous economy, stagnated. Above all, the period from 1880 to 1950 witnessed an inexorable reversal of the past population geography. Given the irrelevance of defensive factors, and above all the collapse of the traditional agriculture cradled in the mountains, the inevitable result was a transference of population from the interior to the coast and specifically from rural residence to the main coastal towns.

DEVELOPMENT AND CONFLICT

By 1950 Corsica languished in a state of chronic underdevelopment, the population having declined to a level comparable with that of the eighteenth century and not much higher than that of the sixteenth century. In 70 years rural Corsica had lost half of its inhabitants and only the two port towns, with half of the island's population in their agglomerations, resisted the downward spiral. The cultivated land area had fallen to 10 per cent of the total island and 45 per cent was covered in unproductive *maquis* (Simi, 1974). The fertile soils of the eastern coastal plain remained uncultivated. Although this decline was largely a spontaneous adjustment to external competition, its magnitude was in some measure due to the French government's neglect of the island's problems. Apart from periodic inventories, such as the *Plan Terrier* (1794), and symbolic gestures, like the Miot Laws of 1801 regulating customs and taxation, the French government took few positive steps to aid the island's development. In the early 1950s, the government's belated recognition of the severity of the decline led to concerted action in the form of a regional development plan (Thompson, 1966, 1971, 1973). Ironically, the government-inspired development programmes have provoked bitter conflict which has accompanied further changes in the settlement pattern and population trends.

The regional development plan initiated in 1957 involved primarily a modernization of agriculture through the reclamation of the eastern coastal plain, and the stimulation of tourism by the creation of new complexes, also sited on the littoral (Renucci, 1961, 1962, 1964; Thompson, 1962, 1967). In both instances mixed-economy development companies were instituted,

La Société pour la Mise en Valeur Agricole de la Corse (S.O.M.I.V.A.C.) being responsible for land reclamation and *La Société pour l'Équipement Touristique de la Corse* (S.E.T.C.O.) for the expansion of tourism. Given the lack of internal capital formation and the dearth of technical and commercial expertise in the private sector, government involvement in terms of investment and technical and administrative personnel was inevitably substantial. The impact on rural settlement of this planned development has been dramatic. The reclaimed lowland was beyond the range of the hill-top villages and a totally new infrastructure of roads, electricity and irrigation systems was provided for new farms in virtually a pioneer context. In turn, the renaissance of the plain has stimulated the activity of the few formerly somnolent settlements, Aleria, Ghisonaccia and Porto-Vecchio. In the case of tourist development, completely new holiday villages have been built, both by the development company and by private interests, complementing the expansion of such established resorts as Calvi and Ajaccio. It might have been anticipated that such major innovations, together with their induced effects on the economy, would have been widely appreciated. On the contrary, the character of development since 1957 has become a source of inflamed conflict in the island. In the case of the new farms, occupancy by Corsicans was at first slow, owing partly to indifference and partly to insufficient access to capital. The situation was retrieved by the repatriation of *pieds noirs* after Algerian independence. Benefitting from resettlement grants, the *pieds noirs*, many of whom were of Corsican extraction, acquired new farms and put their experience of commercial farming to good use. Approximately 17 000 North African repatriates have settled in the island, permeating business and the professions as well as agriculture and raising the spectre of renewed colonization from outside. Similarly, the expansion of tourism has involved much mainland capital, migrant labour and expatriation of profits. Moreover, the form of tourism adopted—package hotels, holiday villages and villas owned by mainlanders as retirement or second homes—has brought little direct profit or employment to the Corsicans and inflicted an alien cosmopolitan life style at odds with the traditional culture. Thus, the dramatic reversal of demographic trends since 1962 in large measure reflects the external origin of the economic development. The temporary flow of *pieds noirs* has been extended by a substantial stream of settlers from mainland France, agricultural settlers from Italy including neighbouring Sardinia, seasonal farm workers from Italy and Portugal, seasonal workers in tourism and North Africans employed in agriculture and public works. Meanwhile, young Corsicans continue to leave the island, and the fact that Corsica has now probably regained the population losses of the last 100 years is to a substantial degree the result of immigration and of developments financed and directed from outside the island. In these circumstances the ground is particularly fertile for conflict. At least four broad themes of conflict have emerged in the course of the island's latest period of development. The first of these is spatial, in that the most striking development in both agriculture and tourism has been coastal, whereas until recently the interior received more limited attention. Accordingly it is the most traditionally Corsican portion of the island that has suffered the heaviest depopulation and which continues to stagnate. Secondly, this spatial imbalance coincides with a cultural conflict. The mountain cradled the indigenous culture and is still the guardian of its speech and folklore, whereas the coast is increasingly synthetic and cosmopolitan. A third conflict concerns the balance of population. Given that the Corsican-born population contains a high proportion of elderly people and that young Corsicans continue to emigrate, it is not inconceivable that by the close of the century the native-born population, currently 70 per cent of the total, will constitute a minority in its own island if present trends are continued. Finally, the most bitter conflict surrounds the issue of dominance. Many Corsicans claim that not only has development been of little direct benefit to them but that control of the island's economic life has passed into outside hands and a phase of neo-colonialism has commenced.

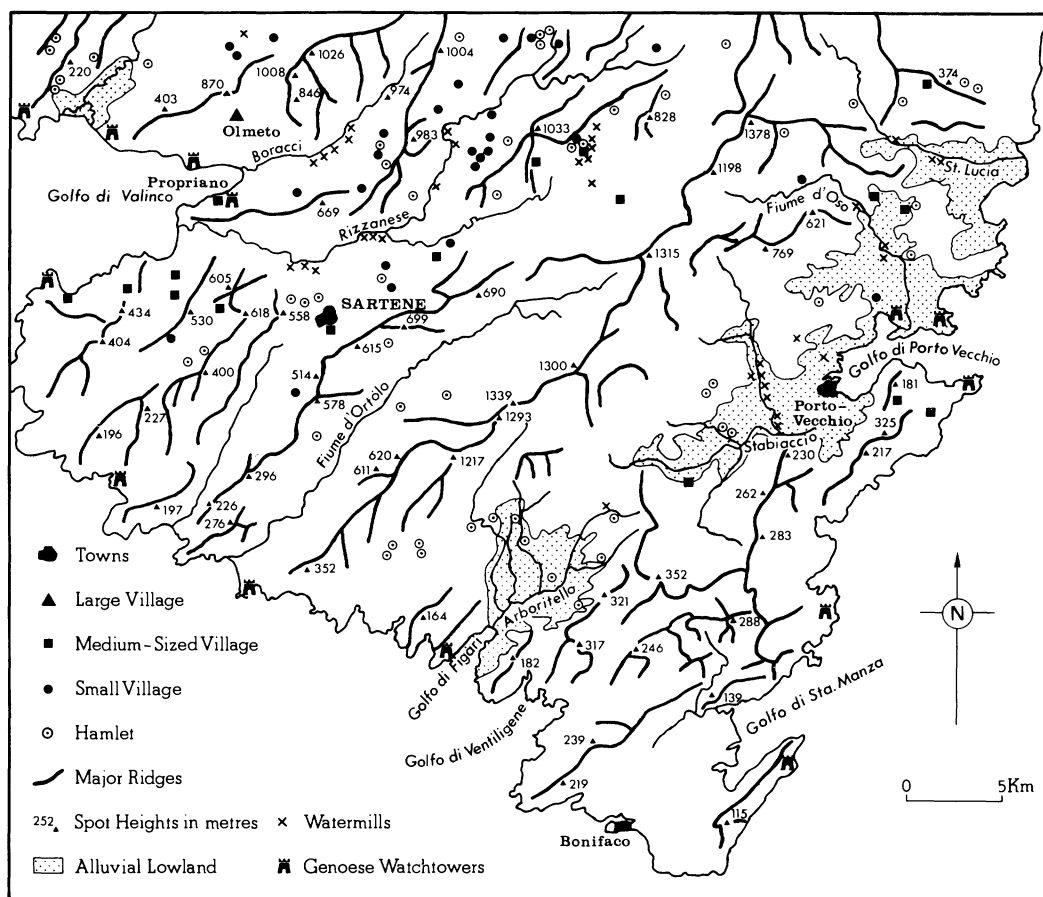


FIGURE 3. Settlement types in southern Corsica, 1824 (after the *Carte de Tranchot*)

In such a heated debate arguments are commonly exaggerated and facts distorted. For example, whereas many Corsicans protest against the resettlement of *pieds noirs* and other outsiders, S.O.M.I.V.A.C. maintains that 84 per cent of its expenditure has been for the general benefit of the island, in terms of research and hydrological development, and 16 per cent for farm installation, of which 75 per cent was on behalf of Corsican-born farmers. It points, too, to the change in emphasis towards renovating the mountain interior by programmes of improved stock-breeding, controlled grazing and forest management. It could also be argued that the recent developments have sprung from initiatives and efforts that the Corsicans themselves failed to effect, against a background of apathy, political intrigue and abuse of natural resources. In this sense outside involvement has simply filled a vacuum and the changes in settlement reflect an adjustment to a more rational system based on the superior resources of the littoral. Whatever the justice in these arguments it is clear that progress has exacted a heavy toll from a fragile culture.

TWO CASE STUDIES: SARTENAIS, CAP CORSE-MARANA PLAIN

It has been argued that three main types of conflict have moulded the Corsican settlement pattern: geopolitical conflict, a conflict of economic systems and conflict stemming from recent

development. The substance of this paper may be concluded by two brief case studies, drawn from the two extremities of the island and illustrating differing aspects of these conflicts.

1. The Sartenais

The Sartenais constitutes Corsica's deep south and is an area of extremely low settlement density. With the exception of the tiny limestone *pays* of Bonifacio, the majority of the area is dissected *côteaux* terrain, rising in the interior to ridges of higher mountain (Fig. 3). Small embayments of littoral are found at the head of the gulfs of Valinco, Figari, Porto-Vecchio and Pinarello. The whole area is dissected by north-east to south-west drainage and the crestlines demarcate the characteristic compartmentalization of the Corsican landscape. Figure 3 is based on a little-known and under-exploited source, the *Carte de Tranchot* published in 1824 (I.G.N., 1824), which has the distinction of including significant detail of the settlement pattern and other aspects of land use. Moreover, the date of the map pre-dates massive exodus from this region and thus gives an accurate indication of the maximum extent of traditional settlement. Figure 3 indicates several classic settlement features in what is one of the most vulnerable portions of the island by virtue of its control of the passage between Corsica and Sardinia. Virtually all of the villages shun the coast and the malarial lowland in favour of hillside sites inland. The chief exceptions are the strategic Genoese *citadelles* of Bonifacio (1195) and Porto-Vecchio (1539). The *Carte de Tranchot* shows both settlements still confined within the Genoese ramparts in 1824, with only a tiny *marine* outside the fortifications at Bonifacio. At this time Porto-Vecchio scarcely merits the title of town, for it is reported in the *Plan Terrier* (1794) as a mere huddle of houses occupied by shepherds in winter and abandoned by them during the malaria season for the village of Quenza, deep in the interior. By contrast the Corsican town of Sartène has an interior location at a fortified hillside site away from the vulnerable Rizzanese routeway. Whereas Bonifacio and Porto-Vecchio grew from military origins, Sartène's were agricultural. The town housed feudal landlords together with their dependent farmers and agricultural labourers. Outside the town a constellation of hamlets and small villages sheltered farmers, and not until the eighteenth century did isolated settlement, in the form of shepherds' huts, appear. Sartène thus depended on traditional farming, with cereals and vines prominent, while the location on important transhumance routes permitted trading with pastoralists. Thus, as the traditional agriculture declined, so Sartène stagnated in the nineteenth century. In contrast Propriano, shown only as a small village in the *Carte de Tranchot*, (a *marine* serving Sartène), is now a small town. Its development dates from the nineteenth century and more especially from the recent surge of tourism. Interior settlement was clearly aligned along the valleys, particularly the Rizzanese, but was rarely sited on the valley floor. The more secure mountain flanks were preferred for defensive reasons. These villages have suffered unrelieved depopulation since the turn of the century, but evidence of a once greater activity is provided by the abundance of watermills (Fig. 3) used to grind cereals and, to a lesser extent, chestnuts. By 1934 Carlotti describes these mills as already dilapidated and abandoned with the decline of cereals in favour of imports (Carlotti, 1936). Porto-Vecchio by contrast has witnessed a renaissance, with the implantation of new farms on the formerly deserted plains and the development of its *marine* as a tourist centre.

2. Cap Corse-Marana Plain

A totally different settlement pattern characterizes the second example—the eastern flank of Cap Corse, Bastia and the Marana Plain (Fig. 4). Cap Corse is exceptional in Corsica in having a long history of attachment to the sea. The valleys run laterally on either side of the north-south crestline and are thus short and steep. The minimal land resources and accidented terrain favoured the development of clusters of hamlets in each valley which turned to the sea to

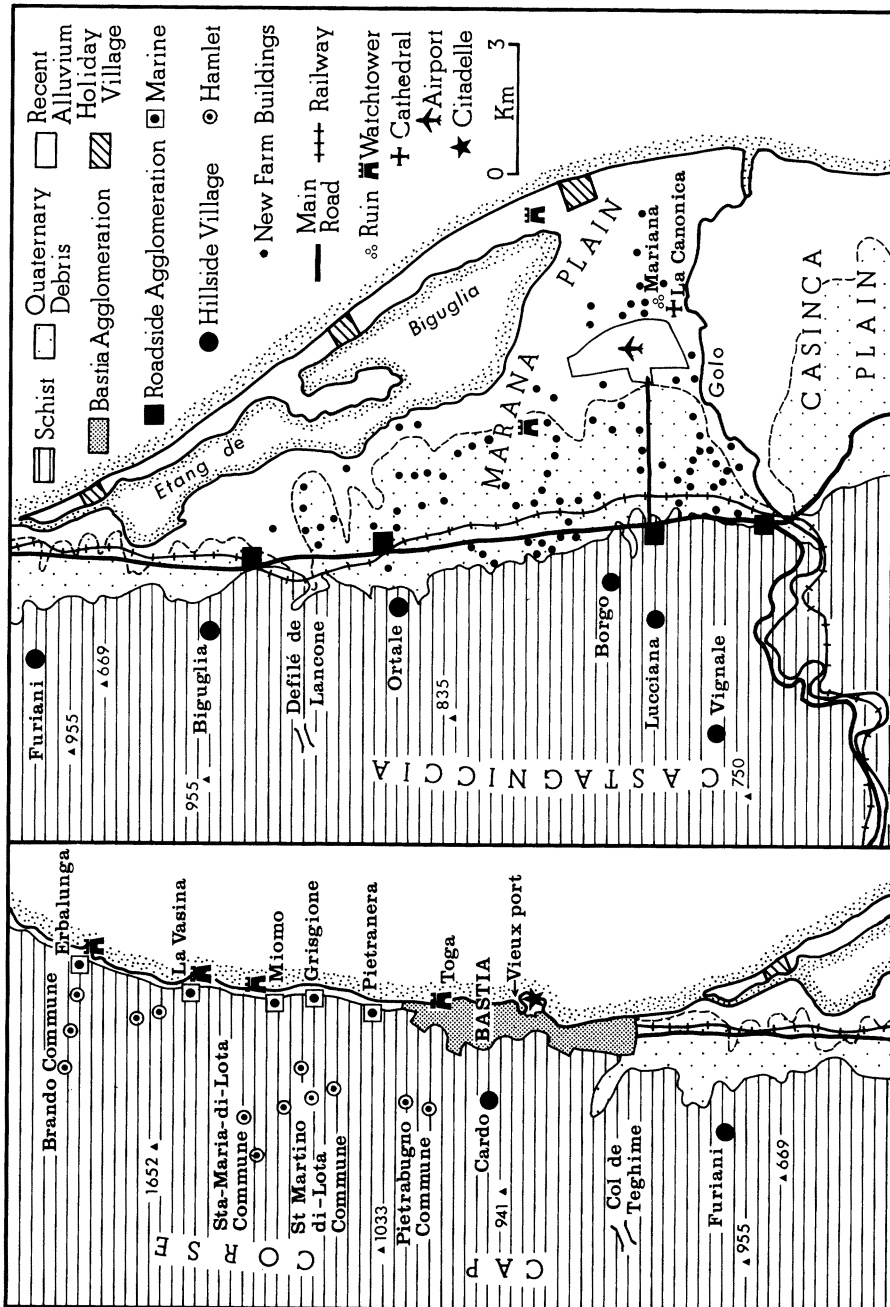


FIGURE 4. Settlement types in the Bastia region

supplement their livelihood. Fishing, coral fishing and trading date back to antiquity and gave rise to tiny *marines*. The hamlets have suffered heavy depopulation and the terraced fields have been abandoned to maquis, but with the recent expansion of Bastia the more accessible hamlets have developed a commuter function and the *marines* have been revived by tourism and villa development.

The rural settlement pattern differs to the south of Bastia. Massively built villages cling to balcony sites on spurs on the abrupt front of the Castagniccia. Overlooking the dissected and largely waterless quaternary terraces and the malarial alluvial sediments surrounding the lagoon of Biguglia, these villages essentially exploited the *côteaux* zone, the littoral serving chiefly as communal grazing outside the malaria season. They shared the same fate of depopulation as the villages of the interior Castagniccia, but proximity to the growth of Bastia and to the now active Marana Plain has spared them from total decline. The greatest transformation, however, has occurred on the Marana Plain. Here the Romans established a city at Mariana near the mouth of the Golo (Fig. 4) which continued in existence after the departure of the Romans until abandoned in the ninth century in the face of barbarian attack. The Pisans attempted to re-establish the town and built a cathedral (La Canonica), but insecurity and malaria drove the population back to the hilltop village of Biguglia, the *étang* continuing to serve as an anchorage. In due course Biguglia fell, this time to Corsican attack, and the Genoese installed their fortress, bishopric and eventual island capital at Bastia. Here the *marine di Cardo* provided a safe anchorage, a rocky promontory was easily fortified and a site was secured away from the malarial plain (Kolodny, 1962). The expansion of Bastia for several centuries was essentially northward, away from the unhealthy plain.

In the eighteenth century new *faubourgs* were established around the *Vieux Port*, followed in the nineteenth century by a virtual new town on reclaimed lowland still further north. With the creation of an artificial port and the arrival of the railway, the centre of gravity was firmly established northwards and the *citadelle* was merely a residential annexe. In the present century the northward movement continued to Toga, but then the exhaustion of available level land coupled with the eradication of malaria opened the way for expansion southwards to the Marana Plain. The repopulation of the plain has thus taken place against the background of the recent planned development elaborated above, and offers the most striking evidence in the island of the conflict between old and new. Development was facilitated by the road and rail lines which traverse the quaternary terraces to gain the Golo valley, the historical routeway to the interior. New apartment complexes have mushroomed along this routeway on to the plain as Bastia burst out from its formerly confined site. Residential development then gives way to an imposing ribbon development of depots, workshops and businesses which line the road as far as the Golo. At road intersections along the route, ribbon development coalesces to form amorphous agglomerations, while much of the southern Marana Plain is occupied by Bastia's international airport. On the surface of the plain the agricultural development company has cleared the maquis, new irrigated farms have been installed and a totally dispersed settlement pattern created. Finally, the sandspit enclosing the lagoon is the site of a number of new holiday villages. The old hill-top villages consequently now overlook the whole panoply of settlement and activity introduced in the phase of rapid development post-1957. Nowhere else in the island is the juxtaposition of authentic but forsaken Corsica and the modern coastal façade so striking and so abrupt. Figure 4 therefore illustrates the three types of conflict defined in this paper. Early settlement is represented by Mariana but then the flight from the coast in the face of attack is reflected in the hillside refuge villages with tiny *marine* outposts guarded by watch-towers, while the long centuries of domination are symbolized by the *citadelle* at Bastia. The stagnating villages of Cap Corse and the Castagniccia, set in abandoned fields, mark the collapse of traditional agriculture in conflict with

imported produce, while the new farms, tourist complexes and light industries established on the plain in the last two decades demonstrate the new elements which call into question the survival of the authentic Corsica. Given this background it is not surprising that Bastia has been a focal point of demonstration and violence in the current autonomy campaign.

CONFLICT AND DOMINATION

The three broad types of conflict elaborated in this paper by no means exhaust the sum of tensions in the island. Political acrimony at local and community level is still rife, the shepherd population still asserts its own identity, commonly firing the maquis to stimulate fresh grazing, with catastrophic results, while the rivalry and antipathy between Bastia and Ajaccio is a further source of friction. Nevertheless, the three sources of conflict proposed are those which have reacted most directly on settlement evolution and also have in common the dimension of outside domination.

The study of the social and economic effects of domination, whether of a political system, an economic order, particular power groups or even a single firm, is an emerging field in geography (Claval, 1976). It is clear in Corsica that domination by external forces has exerted a profound role in the island's affairs, including the settlement characteristics. The force of domination has been strengthened by the cleavages within Corsican society and the physical separation of its component regions. The form of domination has evolved from being one of political control imposed by warfare, through a phase of more passive domination when the island lost control of its own economic destiny, to the present phase of less overt domination by investment by organizations and increasingly by settlers from outside the island. The settlement pattern has responded to each of these phases in terms both of distribution and of form. It is impossible to predict the outcome of the present unrest, for this conflict, like so much of Corsican history, is full of ironies and contradictions. It is true, for example, that Corsica has witnessed a remarkable reversal of its population decline, but this is largely due to immigration and Corsicans continue to desert their island and particularly its countryside. It is true also that the downward spiral of the economy has been halted and impressive new structures created. This, too, owes much to outside capital and personnel and Corsicans point to the potential fragility of the growth with its emphasis on high-grade tourism and expensively grown agricultural produce, both of which operate in highly competitive markets. In particular, Corsicans resent the island's failure to industrialize and thus offer employment opportunities and income levels to compete with those of mainland France which draw young Corsicans away. The final irony is that the Corsican identity which the autonomists are so anxious to preserve, was itself a response to domination, based on a mixture of assimilation, in the case of Corsican speech, and reaction, in the case of village location and form. The present situation is therefore paradoxical in that the dominant economic forces emanate from outside the island while political ferment originates internally in response to these external stimuli. How far a more autonomously controlled Corsica would remain united and cohesive is an open question, for the evidence provided by history is not reassuring.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Acknowledgement is made to the University of Glasgow for a grant towards the cost of illustrations.

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